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HOUSE PASSES COMMON SENSE, BALANCED, JOBS BUDGET

~Focus on Recharging Economy and Creating Jobs for Floridians, Protects Healthcare, Increases Funding for Schools~

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The House today passed a \$70.4 billion budget which increases funding for our children’s classrooms, continues to fund health care services to those in need, provides for core education missions and ensures public safety is maintained.

“House Republicans proved today that even in these difficult economic times and while facing a \$3 billion deficit, we can prioritize spending and pass a responsibly balanced budget. Just like Florida’s families and businesses, the House made the tough choices necessary to position Florida for economic recovery. I want to thank Chairman Rivera and all of the committee and council chairmen for their dedication and hard work in crafting a responsible, common sense budget for Florida,” stated Representative Adam Hasner (R-Delray Beach).

“House Republicans have done the hard work of examining the state budget line-by-line and setting priorities based on the dollars available. Our priorities were maintaining funding in education, health care and public safety. I thank our council and committee members for their hard work so we could meet our responsibility to Florida’s families and businesses. Our priority in this process was to create the conditions necessary for generating jobs and jump starting Florida’s economy,” stated Representative David Rivera (R-Miami), House Appropriations Chairman. “This is the right budget at the right time.”

The House budget proposal includes:

EDUCATION

PreK-12 Education

- In spite of the difficult budget times facing the state of Florida, we continue to place a top priority on our children’s education by providing an over \$1 billion increase in general revenue funding for public schools without raising taxes for Florida’s families.

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This increase in state dollars helps offset a loss of over \$700 million in property tax revenues due to the decline in property values.

- The FY 2010-11 budget for PreK-12 is \$14.0 billion, a 4.38% increase over last year.
- During the past ten years, funding has increased an average of \$187 per student. The budget contains a slight increase this year, bringing average funding levels to \$6,843.51 per student. This is an \$111 million increase over the current year.
- We have increased the state share of the FEFP by \$848.9 million (10/51%) from the current budget to make up for the loss in local funding.
- We continue our commitment to better prepare students for academic success from an early age. The funding for VPK is \$404.4 million and includes an increase due to the success of the program resulting in growth in enrollment.
- The budget continues to fund the Class Reduction for a total of \$2.8 billion, which brings the total funding of the implementation of the amendment for operational and facility adjustments to \$18.7 billion.

Higher Education

- The budget provides \$7 billion, an increase of \$314 million from the current year for the state universities and college systems.
- At approximately \$4,945 a year, the average in-state tuition for Florida's public four-year universities is still well below the current national average of \$6,585.
- Many Floridians rely on Bright Futures to help fund their students college education at our state's universities and community colleges. In order to ensure all eligible students will be funded, there have been slight changes to the eligibility requirements and the utilization of the awards. Finally, flat amount awards have been made a permanent practice.

HEALTH CARE

Faced with an extremely difficult budget, we examined our priorities and gave greatest weight to funding programs that provide services to Florida's most vulnerable citizens:

- Medically Needy and MEDS AD programs were fully restored to approximately 39,684 beneficiaries monthly.
- Medicaid Institutional Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled were held harmless from Medicaid rate reductions.

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- Miami Children's and All Children's Hospital were exempted from rate reductions in recognition of their high Medicaid volume. Rural hospitals were exempted from rate reductions in recognition of their unique financial status.
- Fully funded anticipated Kidcare program enrollment growth for an additional 22,374 children.
- Fully funds the optional Medicaid services for pregnant women between 150-185% of the federal poverty level.
- Fully funds community-based services for elders such as the Local Services Program, Community Care for the Elderly, Homecare for the Elderly, and Alzheimer's Disease Projects.
- Provides \$50 million for Biomedical Research Programs-James and Esther King Biomedical Research Program (\$20 million), Bankhead/Coley Cancer Research Program (\$20 million), and H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center (\$10 million).
- The budget increases funding for the Department of Elder Affairs in order to transition approximately 500 seniors back into a community setting and out of institutionalized nursing home care.
- House Republicans restored funding for important services within DCF such as mental health and substance abuse, maintenance adoption subsidies, and cash assistance for needy families.
- The budget also increases funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs by 11.64% in order to provide adequate staffing for our existing Veterans nursing homes as well as provide the staff needed to begin operations of the new St. Johns County State Veteran's Nursing Home.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Protecting the safety and security of its citizens continues to be the principal responsibility of government. The budget reflects a commitment to uphold the foundational purpose of this legislative body, while making strategic reductions in administrative level activities. The budget is also careful to protect the jobs of the individuals who protect Floridians and others who provide direct services to clients.

Judicial Areas

- There are no reductions in this area that will hinder constitutional due process.

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- The following areas vital to the judicial process are budgeted at:
 - State Attorneys – funded at \$391.2 million, which includes \$304 million in General Revenue and \$87.2 million in Trust Funds.
 - Public Defenders – funded at \$205.8 million, which includes \$172.3 million in General Revenue and \$33.6 million in Trust Funds.

State Courts

- The budget uses \$8.8 million of nonrecurring federal stimulus dollars to enhance our state's drug court program designed, to divert certain offenders from the more costly alternative of prison incarceration.
- To assist the courts with foreclosure case backlogs, \$6 million is provided.
- The Civil Legal Assistance program is funded at \$1 million to assist indigent homeowners in foreclosure cases.

Guardian Ad Litem

- No reductions to the program. The Guardian Ad Litem program will be funded at \$31.1 million.

Department of Corrections (DOC)

- The budget for DOC is \$2.3 billion in General Revenue and \$83.7 million in trust fund to maintain its focus on the safety of our state's residents.
- Due to revised Criminal Justice Estimating Conference projections, there is no additional funding required for prison operations or prison construction.
- Substance abuse funding within DOC was increased by \$1.0 million.
- The House budget does not recommend closing state prisons, releasing prisoners, and also bring the private Blackwater prison operational in November 2010.

Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)

- There are no reductions to either PACE Center for Girls or CINS/FINS (Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services).
- Fiscally constrained counties will receive \$5.6 million for continuing assistance with detention costs.

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ENVIRONMENT

- This budget includes \$15 million for Florida Forever land acquisition.
- This budget also includes \$1 million to fund wildfire equipment which will allow the department to protect Florida's forests, homes, and businesses.
- A total of \$50 million is budgeted for Everglades restoration.
- The State Revolving Fund Program is used to help plan, design and construct drinking water, wastewater and storm water projects throughout the state. The total funding for both programs will be \$271.2 million.
- The Small County Wastewater Treatment Grant Program will be maintained at the current funding level of \$13.6 million.
- Funding in the Inland Protection Trust Fund used to pay for the Petroleum Tank Cleanup Program will experience a significant increase in the next Fiscal Year. Total funding for the program is budgeted at \$120 million. Last year the program only received \$90 million in borrowed funds.
- Funding for Marine Mammal Care (Manatees) programs is budgeted at a total of \$1.9 million.
- The budget also includes \$15.5 million for the restoration of Florida's beaches.

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